

**DOCUMENT 8:
'The Parting of the Ways', editorial in *The International*, October
1, 1915.**

OUR JUSTIFICATION

As was announced in last week's issue of *The International*, the anti-militarists have definitely seceded from the South African Labour Party, and have formed a separate organisation called the International Socialist League (SA). The first step was the formation of the International League within the Party. This was done in the lingering hope that the Party might relent considerably in the application of its 'see it through' policy, and afford some prospect of winning it back to what the Internationals consider its native principles. But it was not to be. Drunk with its newly-found ascendancy, the majority rode rough-shod over all finer sentiments of old associations, comradeship, freedom of thought, or working class qualifications; and, with one eye on the pledge and the other on the Capitalist

Press, insisted upon the imposition of its Imperialism on that pledge, and on its signature anew by every candidate for public office.

TWO POLES MUTUALLY REPULSIVE

With the anxiety of the one section to protest its loyalty to the Empire by constant public dissociation from the Internationals, and the impatience of the Internationals at the growing flagwagging propensities of the majority, the antagonism within the Party soon created an impossible situation, and the link finally broke.

In addition to the inevitable estrangement, the secession was helped by other considerations. The Party has become definitely tainted with militarism and Imperialism. The alternatives were to remain silent within the Party, (an unthinkable attitude), or loudly to proclaim true working class principles; which latter inevitably made for expulsion in any case.

THE TWO UNITIES

It was a case of duty to the International as against the obligation to working class unity. It soon became evident however that unity for us meant unity with the anti-war minorities of Socialism all over the world. It was even felt latterly that the best answer to those who wished to 'bore from within' was that no reclamation of the party to Socialism after the war will have any virtue unless a section of it have unmistakably rebelled against its capitulation to capitalism. We claim that in the present conflict our best service to South Africa will be rendered by considering the claims of humanity at large. We have applied the same principle here. The best way to secure local unity is to make International unity our guide. Whether or not the present Labour Party will ever desire or deserve any working affiliation with the League on its return to sanity, the imperative duty of the hour is to give adequate voice to the International spirit in South Africa. If that has made secession inevitable – well and good. The fact that the final break was preceded by some lingering hesitation, not to say vacillation, is a guarantee of earnest consideration.

GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES

And now the principles of International Socialism in South Africa are in our keeping. We have undertaken great responsibilities. Every member of the League must feel the need for concentrating all available energies on making the organisation well worthy of the principles which it is to enshrine. We have the whole of South Africa to organise; and if we do not make the International Socialist League the most effective and best organised Party of the workers in South Africa, we hope to at least deserve that success.

NEW METHODS

We trust the League will draw new lessons from the spirit of the time. It will endeavour to ascertain from the experiences of the past year the pitfalls in organisation which should be avoided. The Provisional Constitution of the League appears in another column. It is purposely simple and embracing, insisting firmly on the one principle which accounts for our existence. We have learnt something of the dangers of too elaborate constitutions and pledges. Greater freedom of action will undoubtedly mark the Labour movement of the future. The War on War League has done magnificent work on a constitution of two lines only, proving that hard personal service in the Branches, and not constitutions, will do the work.

LARGER BRANCHES

There was a case not long ago of an electric plant working of itself all night through, after the attendant had been electrocuted. The Labour Party is very much in that position. Most of its Branches are now mere skeletons kept in being by persons interested in getting nominated for public office. The League will not follow the old method of forming Branches of ten in every constituency. Running candidates for public bodies will only be one of our methods, and not perhaps the most important one. Strong central Branches therefore rather than many small and scattered ones, is the securest organisation.

APPEAL TO SOCIALISTS

In this connection we would appeal to the Socialist Societies of Durban, Capetown, Pretoria, as well as other kindred organisations, to link up into one International Socialist Organisation for South Africa. Most encouraging response is being given by isolated Socialists in all parts of South Africa, to whom the Labour Party has not been able to make any appeal. The Socialists of the Transvaal have given sufficient guarantee of fidelity to the cause which they now espouse to give them the right to urge upon the organised Socialists of the other Provinces to link up at all costs. The Conference of the League which it is hoped to call in a few months time should be representative of the whole of South Africa. We look with confidence to them to rise to the greatness of the occasion, and form in South Africa an organisation worthy of the International.

THE OUTLOOK

We have glorious tasks to perform for South Africa and Socialism during the coming years. The nature of these tasks will happily prevent our being spoilt by overmuch public applause. A dilettante and exclusive Internationalism will however have to be guarded against. The International Socialist League will have

the more significance the more it tends to pull the working class of South Africa with it. This involves a corresponding interest in industrial organisation with a view to giving it an International outlook.

THE REAL PROLETARIAT

Moreover, an Internationalism which does not concede the fullest rights which the native working class is capable of claiming will be a sham. One of the justifications for our withdrawal from the Labour Party is that gives untrammelled freedom to deal, regardless of political fortunes, with the great and fascinating problem of the native. If the League deal resolutely in consonance with Socialist principles with the native question, it will succeed in shaking South African Capitalism to its foundations. Then and not till then, shall we be able to talk about the South African Proletariat in our International relations. Not till we free the native can we hope to free the white. Is militarism to be destroyed, capitalism to be chained, and the lust of conquest 'dragged captive through the deep' by the immeasurably finer order of the Great International that is to be? then

SOCIALISTS OF SOUTH AFRICA UNITE!